

**LIFE HISTORY OF THE SCIRON SKIPPER *TRAPEZITES SCIRON*  
*EREMICOLA* BURNS (LEPIDOPTERA: HESPERIIDAE)**

The skipper butterfly *Trapezites sciron eremicola* inhabits open heathland in mallee areas from Eyre Peninsula to western Victoria. The nominate subspecies, *T. s. sciron* Waterhouse & Lyell, was described from southwestern Australia. The life history and early stages of ssp *eremicola* are described here from material collected in Ngarkat Conservation Park (35°40'S, 140°30'E), South Australia.

*Larval food plant: Lomandra glauca* (R. Br.) Ewart (Liliaceae). In the butterfly's habitat the plant occurs predominantly on the northern aspect of the crests of ridges and sandhills (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Habitat of *T. sciron eremicola*, Billiatt Conservation Park, South Australia. Larval food plants in left foreground.

*Description of immature stages.* Egg (Fig. 2A): diameter 1 mm; almost hemispherical with 19–22 distinct vertical ridges intersected by numerous obscure lateral lines; pale cream when newly laid but developing a broad brown lateral band after several days.

First instar larva (Fig. 2B): length 3 mm; body white with a few long posterior setae, prothoracic

plate a dark brown transverse band; head shining black with a few short setae.

Mature larva (Fig. 2C, D): length 20 mm; body white with obscure grey markings and a distinct grey dorsal line, spiracles black, prothoracic plate with a black posterior margin, anal plate with numerous swollen white setae arising from black bases and with four short, black-tipped posterior setae; head capsule rugose and with short swollen setae, dark brown with scattered paler markings; frons with paired longitudinal pale brown bands diverging ventrally.

Pupa (Fig. 2E, F): length 17 mm; cylindrical, abdomen tapering sharply and terminating in a red-brown cremaster with a cluster of hooked setae; pale brown with darker markings, particularly on the head and thorax, body surface except wing cases with groups of branched white setae. The setae resemble those described on the pupae of *Trapezites heteromaculata* Meyrick & Lower<sup>1</sup>.

*Biology:* Eggs are laid singly on the leaves of the food plant. The young larva emerges from the egg after about five days and makes a simple shelter by joining the bases of a few fresh leaves of the food plant with silk. When more mature it constructs a silken shelter incorporating debris, dried leaves and sand which is attached to residual leaves where they arise from the basal sheaths of the food plant (Fig. 2G, H). Pupation occurs in late August within the shelter, which is open at the top and well-concealed. Adults appear from spring to early summer and both sexes exhibit hill-topping behaviour in open areas on the crests of sandhills.

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<sup>1</sup>Atkins, A. F. & Miller, C. G. (1977). *Aust. ent. Mag.* 3, 104–106.

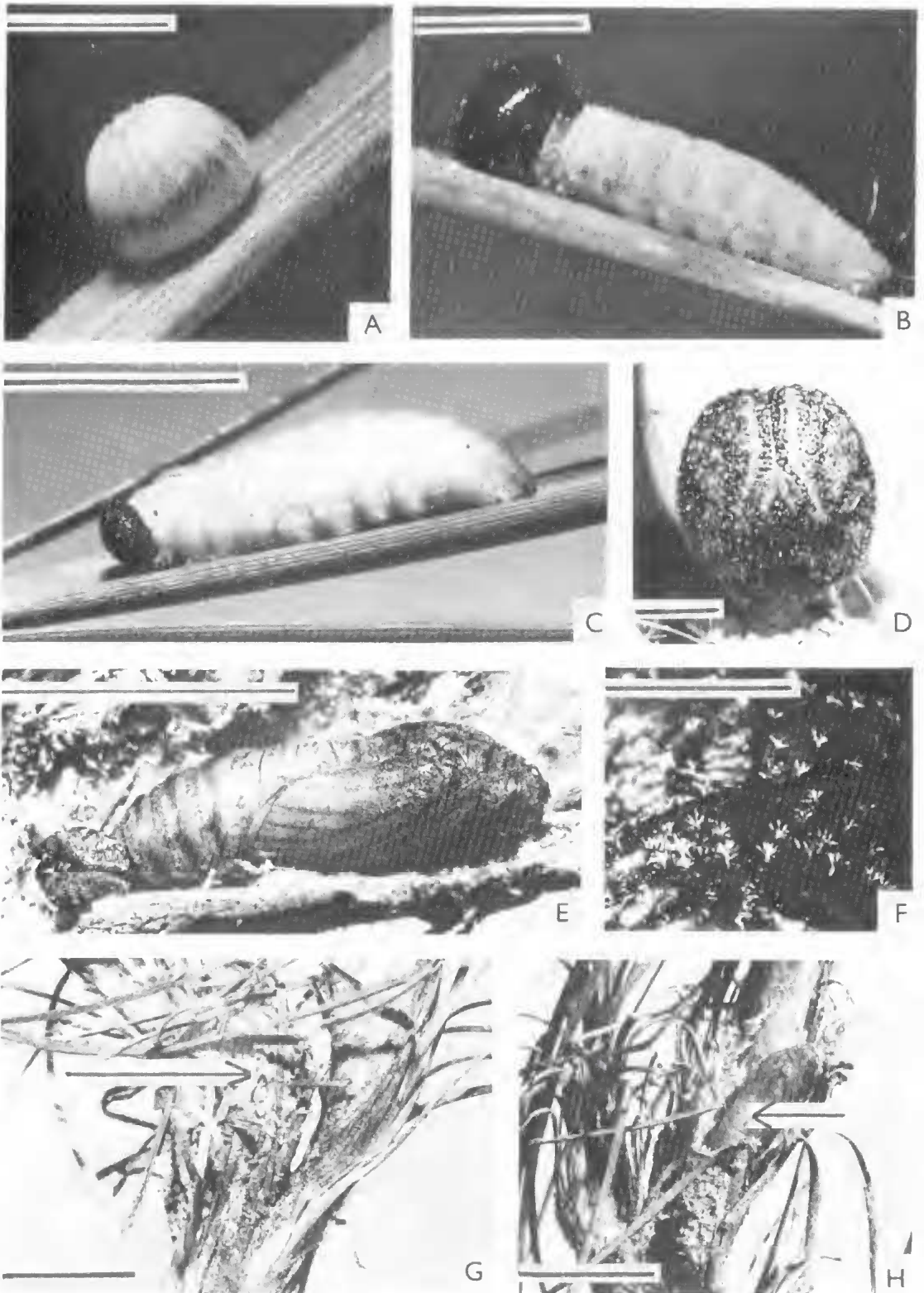


Fig. 2. *T. sciron eremicicola*. A egg. B first instar larva. C mature larva. D head of mature larva. E pupa with larval head cast at left. F branched setae on pupa. G, H larval or pupal shelters, H partly opened to show pupa. Bar scales A, B, D, F—1 mm; C, E, G, H—1 cm.